

The New Start of Square Dancing

By Patrick Demerath

The American Callers' Association wishes that all callers and dancers stay healthy and avoid Corona Virus by following the guide lines of staying home and avoiding crowds, keeping a safe distance from others and wash hands. Keep vigilant and stay healthy.

The Board of Directors and the members of the American Callers' Association would like to express its thanks to **Bill and Randy Boyd**, the former owners of American Square Dance magazine for allowing ACA to publish literature in American Square Dance. You will be missed by all, and we wish you happiness, health and success. At the same time, ACA would like to welcome **Ms. Susan Elaine and Harry Packer**, the new owners of American Square Dance Magazine and wish them good luck in this new venture. Also ACA also pledges its support to American Square Dance magazine.

The American Callers' Association in its attempt to be of service to all callers, dancers, and associations provided current, timely, and effective information on new dancer recruitment, winning ways to retain club dancers, and pitfalls to drive square dancers 2001 to 2020. ACA really appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers and dancers all over the country and from abroad to continue these initiatives. ACA will continue to provide information that will help the square dance community recruit, retain and retrieve square dancers as well as Pandemic passes.

This month's ACA Viewpoint discusses the common bond of square dancers that all dancers hold. It is especially relevant as square dancing gets its new start after the Corona Virus. Whenever, a person is identified as a square dancer, he or she often attempts to invite people to try square dancing. The square dancer is often asked about the values and the traditions of square dancing. The prospect might ask or think: "Why should I become a square dancer?" "What would I gain from square dancing?" In my own experience as a dancer for 35 years and as a caller for 30 years, I can remember many instances in which I had received such questions from friends and acquaintances. We have often strived to answer such questions about the benefits of square dancing. It is truer today in view of the situation.

Often we answer such questions with "fun, friendship, and fellowship" of square dancing. We can cite the history of square dancing in what it means to people now and to people two-hundred years ago and one-hundred years ago often mentioning some of the prominent people who square danced. We can draw attention to the many new friendship opportunities of square dancing and cite the many wonderful friends that we all made. Even the non-dancing social gatherings enjoyed by square dancers and their families are a significant part of the square dancing equation.

If we look around at other organizations, all of these benefits are not unique to square dancing. Other social, civic and religious organizations provide many such opportunities for benefits that square dancers enjoy. At this time of the a temporary cease and possible decline in square dancing, I sometimes become disillusioned because I can never provide a convincing statement that would explain the one quality benefit most central to square dancing. Some may feel that they fail to present a convincing summation of square dancing's values and benefits. "What is it that sets square dancing apart from other groups?"

The answer to this question is not evident unless one looks into a square of new student dancers. If we look at them in lessons, we see laughing, fun and a beaming sense of accomplishment. Still, these are not the elements that set square

dancing apart from other activities. Upon looking at the square of new dancers for several times, I finally found the answer to my question. Student dancers all share "EQUALITY" which is the most vital element in our beloved square dancing as well as is required to ensure continuation and prospering of square dancing.

When a person enters the hall for a square dance lesson, all the cares and woes that accompany life in the outside world disappear from his/her memory. Each square dance student dances with seven others in a square in full and complete harmony. It matters little what is their business, education, wealth, or profession. At this point, the person is a square dancer and all else disappears, as the dancers are united in the square following the patten by the caller.

It can be argued that the sum of the history and the social benefits of square dancing, powerful as they are, pale in importance to the "EQUALITY" of each new student dancer having fun in the square. Perhaps, this is why so many people drop out of square dance classes, stop dancing right after graduation, and are lost to our community. Perhaps, it is a reason why square dancing is in decline. Perhaps, the various programs of competency drive new dancers drive new dancers away because the EQUALITY among square dancers is the one element that unites all square dancers.

Perhaps, we have taken EQUALITY away from dancers after they graduate from classes by our more difficult dance programs.

The ACA one floor program can be taught in as little as 16 weeks, reduces the stress on the dancers and callers alike and encourages dancing associations to reject the plus and advanced programs of stress and segregation of dancers and return square dancing to EQUALITY. ACA further recognizes that the cumbersome mainstream/plus dance program is helping to decrease the number of square dancers as it destroys EQUALITY, which appears to be the central uniting bond of square dancers. All else is commentary. The bottom line is that if we as callers, dancers and leaders take away EQUALITY, it will seriously damage square dancing. All square dancers should be able to feel the EQUALITY of square dancing, and EQUALITY will help square dancing grow and prosper.

Any individual, club, caller, or association who wishes to communicate his/her opinions on this subject is encouraged to contact the American Callers' Association at loulet@aol.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at pdemerath17@gmail.com

Normally we like to end the ACA articles with the following with:

"Until Next Time, Happy Dancing".

In lieu of the tragic Corona Virus and temporary cessation of Square Dancing:

"Wait with patience for the next time we dance and have ten times as much fun.

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